



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Tuesday, April 10, 2001

HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK IN MONROE COUNTY PROMPTS CLINICS AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

Cases of hepatitis A through the first quarter of the year in Monroe County are up substantially, prompting health officials to increase efforts to vaccinate persons at high-risk from the viral illness.

Monroe County typically has between 20-25 cases of hepatitis A in a year. This year, 23 cases have been reported to the Monroe County Health Department and interviews conducted by staff indicate that more than 60% of the cases are occurring within the gay community.

Health officials are undertaking a number of activities to stem the spread of hepatitis A, including:

- Offering immunization clinics in various locations in the community
- Communicating with local health care providers about the outbreak
- Collaborating with organizations from the gay community to promote prevention education and vaccination

Hepatitis A is caused by a virus. Symptoms can include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal cramping, dark urine and yellowing of the skin. Some individuals with hepatitis A experience no symptoms, but can spread the illness.

Hepatitis A is usually spread via the fecal-oral route by either person-to-person contact or ingestion of contaminated food or water. Groups at increased risk for hepatitis A or severe outcomes, include, people travelling to developing countries, men who have sex with men, people with chronic liver disease and drug users.

A vaccine is available for hepatitis A. It is administered with two-doses over a period of 6-12 months. Health officials routinely follow-up with close contacts of people ill from hepatitis A and recommend immune globulin if it is within two weeks of exposure.

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A Hepatitis A Immunization Clinic will be held at the Monroe County Health Department, 111 Westfall Road, on April 12 from 3:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m. Additional clinics are in the process of being scheduled at other community sites.

The cost of the vaccine is \$32. Some insurance policies may reimburse the cost for adults who are at high-risk. Persons unable to pay for the vaccine should discuss the matter with clinic staff.

This special clinic is not intended for individuals planning to travel to foreign countries. The Health Department provides immunizations to travelers by appointment.

An information line has been set up at **274-6189** and information is posted on the county web site at: www.co.monroe.ny.us/health.

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For more information, call:

Communications and Special Events, 428-2380

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